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THE RELATION OF
QOHELETH
TO
CONTEMPORARY GREEK PHILOSOPHY

*A Thesis in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

SUBMITTED BY

GUSTAV ARNOLD CARSTENSEN, M.A.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

1903

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THE RELATION OF QOHELETH

TO

CONTEMPORARY GREEK PHILOSOPHY.

I

In the epilogue to the book called קהלת occurs this admonition,* בני הזהר עשות ספרם הרבה אין קץ ("My son, be on thy guard; there is no end of making books in great number.") The commentaries upon this strange writing (or collection of writings?) are so many and diverse as to afford a verification of the statement and a reckless disregard of the warning. To attempt to read them all would be to prove the next observation: ולהג הרבה יגעת בשר (And much study is a weariness of flesh†). The book called Ecclesiastes seems to have had a wonderful fascination for students of all shades of belief and unbelief ever since its admission to the Canon. Its very place in the sacred writings presents one of the most puzzling questions at the outset. How came it there? What induced the Jewish doctors to include among their canonical books one which seemed to an influential school of the time to be so subversive of truths as set forth in the books upon which they were all agreed? This question, as well as many others to which our limits forbid so much as an allusion, has received the careful consideration of the most learned and thoughtful scholars only to be answered in ways almost as contradictory as they are multitudinous. Professor Haupt, of Johns Hopkins University, disposes of the question of canonicity by arming himself cap-a-pie and driving a coach and four into the ranks of the whole army of exegetes and proclaiming in his rough-and-ready manner that the contemporaries of Ecclesiastes, finding themselves unable to suppress the book, "endeavored to darken its meaning for dogmatic purposes, saying: 'Let us save the attractive book for the congregation, but we will pour some water in the author's strong

*Eccl. xii, 12.

†Ibid.

wine.' ”* It would be interesting to know upon what historical basis the Baltimore professor rests his assumption. At most, it is but a plausible conjecture. Equally gratuitous is the other assumption that the canonicity of Qoheleth is set aside in St. Luke's Gospel (xii, 15-31) by the picture presented by our Saviour of the rich man who said to his soul: “Thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.” “Thou fool,” says the Almighty, “this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” Professor Haupt naively observes that no one but himself has even perceived that “these words are evidently directed against Ecclesiastes.” It seems less likely that so self-evident a proposition should have escaped the attention of so many students, than that it should be so manifest as it seems to be to the mind of Professor Haupt. Is it not more reasonable to conclude in the absence of any demonstration of what Professor Haupt in his utter loneliness sets forth, that the weight of scholarship rejects any such inference? It is clear enough that there is a condemnation of the Epicurean teaching, repeated five times in Qoheleth: **אין טוב באדם שיאכל ושחה והראה נסו טוב בעמלו** (There is nothing better among men than that one should eat and drink and that his soul should see good in his toil).† But this is not to say that there is any special condemnation of the book Qoheleth. But assuming that there is such a condemnation, was not one great burden of Christ's teaching, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you,” etc. It by no means follows that because the teaching of Qoheleth was inferior to that of the Gospel, Qoheleth is out of place in the Canon. On that rule, we should be obliged to reject the teaching of Moses and of David. Such a principle would ban the Decalogue itself. Leaving the airy generalizations of Professor Haupt, let us examine the facts. Scholars are not agreed as to when the canonicity of Qoheleth was settled. We know that the question was long debated by the rival schools of Hillel and Shammai. Wright does not agree with Davidson and Graetz that the question was an open one until the synod of Jamnia, A. D. 90. He also opposes the statement of Robertson Smith that Qoheleth and the Song of Solomon “were still controverted up to the very end of the first Christian century,” and seems to make out a fairly plain case in asserting that Qoheleth was regarded as Holy Scripture in the time of Herod the Great,‡ when it was quoted as of co-ordinate authority with the Law of Moses. The controversy between the schools seems to have been not so much about the canonicity of the book, as about its relative value. Long after the Canon was closed, certain books were questioned, and this not

*Paper read before the Oriental Club of Philadelphia, 1891.

†Vide ii, 24; iii, 13; v, 17; viii, 15; xii, 22.

‡Ecclesiastes in the Light of Modern Criticism and Pessimism, p. 19 et seq.

always by unbelievers, but often by the defenders of revelation. As Delitzsch maintains, the Old Testament Canon, like the New, had its antilegomena. The difficulties were settled after careful examination, and both parties to the controversy agreed in the recognition of the Divine authority of the disputed facts. This shows how wide of the mark must be any theory of surreptitious juggling with popular ignorance, as set forth by Professor Haupt.

To accept the canonicity of Qoheleth is not to accept the traditional interpretations of the Jews and early Christians as to the date and authorship of the book. Until the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, commentators were practically unanimous in ascribing the authorship to King Solomon, as the opening words seem to imply: **דברי קהלת בן דוד מלך ירושלים** (The words of Qoheleth, Son of David, King in Jerusalem i. i.). Modern criticism, with like unanimity, rejects the traditional view and assigns it to an unknown author in a much later period. But even among the later critics, there is wide divergence as to the question of date. Ewald, Ginsburg and Hengstenberg assign it to the period of the Persian domination, and it is safe to say that no respectable critic places the date earlier than the exile. We must assume at least an approximate date before we can proceed further with our subject. Suffice it to take for granted that the literary ethics of the period, whatever the date may be, did not prevent the author from writing in the name of Solomon, just as Plato made Socrates the spokesman in his dialectics. A similar literary device which deceives no one, and is not intended to deceive, is seen in Holmes' "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," and in Robert Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra;" or still more strikingly in the "Sartor Resartus"—in which are paralleled the strange paradoxes and seeming contradictions of Qoheleth—Carlyle recording his follies and doubts, and the inmost secrets of his life, under the imaginary experience of a mythical German professor, and doing it with a freedom and picturesqueness which would not be possible in a bald autobiography. By making Solomon his mouth-piece, in philosophizing upon human life, Qoheleth employs an innocent but telling means of emphasizing his own reflections. Plumptre's ingenious "ideal biography" may be somewhat strained in some places; nevertheless, it is consistent in the main, with the inner structure of the book. Moreover, the most rigid adherents of the traditional view of the Solomonic authorship of Qoheleth must admit that other sacred writers did not hesitate to adopt a literary device like that claimed by the newer criticism for Qoheleth. The greater number of psalms, for example, which have the superscription **לדוד**, as Delitzsch argues, "were not composed by David himself, but by unknown poets who transferred them-

selves in thought into David's place, situation and feelings." A notable instance is Psalm cXLIV, which Delitzsch thinks was founded upon the saying of David in his duel with Goliath, וידעו כל הקהל הזה כי לא בהרב ובחנית יהושע יהוה כי ליהוה המלחמה ("And that all this assembly may know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hands").*

A still more striking instance is furnished by Psalm cVI, which even so conservative a scholar as Perowne admits to be post-exilic. The first and the last two verses of this psalm are assigned by the writer of the Chronicles (I Chron. xvi) to David, when he describes the praises which were sung when the ark was removed from the house of Obed-Edom to the tabernacle which David had set up for it in Jerusalem. We might multiply the instances, both ancient and modern, of the literary device which meets us at the opening of Qoheleth; but the linguistic evidences against the Solomonic authorship are such as the most radical traditionalists are forced to admit. The Aramaisms are utterly inconsistent with pre-exilic authorship—as much so as would be the appearance of such words as "telephone" and "automobile" in a work of the eighteenth century. Delitzsch affirms that unless this book be post-exilic, "there is no history of the Hebrew language." The feeble attempt has been made to explain away these linguistic peculiarities by ascribing them to a spirit of pedantry in Solomon; but whatever may have been Solomon's faults, he was above the necessity or the disposition for such silly affectation. While there is substantial agreement among the best scholars as to the post-exilic date, there is not a little divergence as to closer approximation. Plumptre argues strongly for the first quarter of the second century B. C., and cites a number of strong traces of the influence of the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy,† and while no one of these may be convincing in itself, there is a cumulative force in the array of striking parallels and resemblances which goes a long way towards conclusive demonstration. It is worthy of note, moreover, that the Jewish critic Durembourg arrives at a like conclusion in his "*La Morale de l'Ecclesiasté* (1895)." He says, "Judaism has had the rare luck of falling under the control of philosophers only at a recent date If we except monotheism, all opinions have been able to push themselves into the light. . . . However, towards the beginning of the second century B. C. the influence of Greek Philosophy began to be felt in Palestine. The ideas of Plato concerning the immortality of the soul began to be diffused. It is

*I Sam. xvii, 47.

†Cambridge Bible, p. 30 et seq.

to this doctrine that Qoheleth alludes in Chapter iii, 21: **מי יודע**, רוח בני האדם העלה היא למעלה ורוח הבהמה הירדה היא למטה לארץ,

in insinuating that doubt which dominates his whole work." Qoheleth dares not to dwell upon this doctrine, for he is too much attached to the religion of his fathers; too devout and conscientious a Jew, in other words, to regard, without suspicion, any doctrine, however convincing in itself, and whatever its inherent excellence, if it be taught by so evil a thing as pagan philosophy. "Qoheleth belongs, then, to the second quarter of the second century B. C." Graetz goes further and believes the book to belong to the time of Herod the Great (10 B. C.), and sees in it a protest against the asceticism of the Essenes and the political corruptions of that reign. However this may be, it does not affect the thesis which we are endeavoring to defend, that Qoheleth is the work of a man whose views of life were largely traceable to the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy. The passage (iii, 21) quoted above is a good point of departure for a study of the author's mental attitude throughout the book. The unpointed text justifies the rendering of all the ancient versions as well as that of the Vulgate, as follows: "Who knoweth if the spirit of the children of Adam goeth upward, and if the spirit of the beast goeth downward?" This seemed to the Massorites quite inconsistent with the character of a book which, by its place in the Canon, must be accepted as inspired. The very simple device of pointing ה in העלה and הירדה as the article instead of as the interrogative particle, would give a possible rendering which would be quite orthodox, thus: "Who seeth the spirit of man which goeth upward to heaven, and the spirit of the beast which goeth downward to the earth." To a superficial observer this may seem an allowable rendering; but it does not correct a very serious difficulty—namely, the repetition of the pronoun **היא** in the second number of the phrase. There is but one way of accounting for this repetition. It is to make clear the fact that the participles **עלה** (ה) and **ירדה** (ה) are not in apposition with the noun **רוח**. The interrogative form is consistent, not only with the LXX, the Peshito and the Vulgate, but in St. Jerome's other version (that in his commentary, Migne, P. L. xxiii, 1041) we read "Et quis scit spiritus filiorum hominis, si ascendat ipse sursum, et spiritus pecoris si descendat ipse deorsum in terram?" The interrogative rendering, moreover, is the only one consistent with the context; for if we read in vv, 19-20, that judging from external appearances men die like beasts, and then in v, 20 a parenthetical exclamation that a man's **רוח** ascends to heaven and a beast's **רוח** descends to the earth, how can we account for the conclusion which he im-

mediately draws in v. 22. "So I saw that there was nothing better than that man should rejoice in his works, for that is his portion." Giving v. 21 the interrogative rendering, the passage 19-22 is consistent throughout. In support of this statement let us note carefully the latter portion of v. 22, **כִּי מִי יֵבִיאֵנוּ לְרֵאוֹת, בְּמָה שִׁיְהִיָּה אַחֲרָיו**. The ancient versions render **אַחֲרָיו** as follows: LXX, *μετ' αὐτόν*, Vulgate "post se futura,"—the plain sense of which its "after his death" and Franz Delitzsch avers very positively that **אַחֲרָיו** must and can mean, only and always, that which follows the present life. It has been necessary to go into this question of interpretation rather fully, because so much that is perplexing in the remainder of the book may be explained if we have a correct understanding of this passage. Wright argues (p. 192) that the interrogative clauses do not convey the insinuation that there is no difference between man and beast. "On the contrary," he says, "these interrogative clauses suggest, if they do not actually assert, the very opposite." He then proceeds to indicate a probable reference to an aphorism in the Book of Proverbs, **אִרְאֵה חַיִּים לַמַּעַלָּה לְמִשְׁכִּיל לְמַעַן סוֹר מִשְׁאוֹל מָטָה** (Prov. xv, 24), which is rendered in the Revised Version, "To the wise the way of life (goeth) upward that he may depart from Sheol beneath;" and in the Authorized Version, "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." The former rendering is substantially identical with that of Wright, "The wise man goes the way of life which leads upwards in order that he may depart from Sheol downwards." "In other words," says Wright, "the wise man proceeds on the way of life which leads one upwards, with the distinct object before him of escaping from the path which leads to Sheol and ends there." He then proceeds to argue upon the strength of Delitzsch's testimony, that the word "Sheol" at the time that the passage in Proverbs was written, had begun to lose its former general signification as a place of gloom even for the righteous, but to which all alike were obliged to descend at the death of the body, and to take on the meaning of a place of punishment for the ungodly. However, the meaning appears never to have become general; and even if it had been so understood and used by Qoheleth, we shall still have to account for the singular incongruity of such a reflection with the context as has been indicated above. At best, Wright's position is a precarious one. It is doubtful if any Jew, up to this time, had formed as high a conception of the immortality of the soul as that taught by Plato. The Old Testament is wanting in any direct or positive teaching of the inherent, or even potential, immortality of the soul. The Jews never thought of death as anything but a punishment. "Sheol" is invariably pictured in sombre colors. The thought

of going there is always a forbidding one. They knew no such prayer as "Requiescant in pace," for such mortals as had "fallen asleep;" they could only wail and lament for those "qui descendunt in infernum." Why should such a passage in Qoheleth seem strange when it accords so nearly with "the writing of Hezekiah when he had been sick (Isiah xxxviii, 9-20), of which the whole conclusion seems to be, **לֹא יִשְׁכְּבוּ יְרֵדֵי בּוֹר** **אֶל אֲמֹתָךְ** (v. 18), "They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth." (R. V.) Why should one recoil from Qoheleth more than from such a passage as Job iii, 13, **כִּי אַתָּה שָׁכַבְתִּי וְאִשְׁקִית**." (R. V.) or Psalm lxxxviii, 10-20, "Wilt thou show wonders to the dead . . . Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in Abaddon? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" (R. V.) or Psalm cxiv, 17, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." In these two books, Psalms and Job, may be found contradictions as glaring as any in Qoheleth. For example: in Job xix, 25-27, we read, "For I know that my **נַפְשִׁי** liveth and that he shall stand up at the last upon the dust; and after my skin hath been destroyed this; (shall be) even from (or without) my skin shall I see God whom I shall see on my side, and mine eyes shall behold and not another." (R. V.) or Psalm xvi, 10, "Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thy beloved one to see the pit." It is aside from our present purpose to do more than try to show that these two books, which were never among the antilegomena, as was Qoheleth, present just as striking contrasts as are found between the early part of Qoheleth and the Epilogue. When we confront these apparent inconsistencies, does it not seem wise to conclude with Kaufmann* that "the simplest explanation is the best," and that "Qoheleth is an ancient who has not all the methods of thinking of Mill or Schopenhauer—he is not even a Montaigne; he is not a Frenchman, but a Semite. His work is not a rhapsody of *disjecta membra*. It is the work of a believer in a struggle with doubt, who sometimes contradicts himself as did Job and David and Augustine and Pascal."

Before proceeding further, it may fortify our position to quote Bishop Haneberg† in dealing with the difficulties in the teaching of Qoheleth. "They are best met," he says, "if we admit (1) that it was written in times of terrible anarchy and decay (about 200 B. C.) and that it was upon life not absolutely, but as he witnessed it, that the writing passes sentence and (2) that he

*Expositor, June, 1899.

†Geschichte der. bibl. Offenbarung, p. 53.

stands between the pre-exilic period, when the individual found his end in membership with his God-loved free nation, and the Christian dispensation with its clear and constant doctrine of the fuller life beyond the grave; and that hence, as the ceremonial law, according to St. Paul, so this book also helps to demonstrate the insufficiency of that covenant which was then decaying and near its end."

II.

If we have succeeded in demonstrating the unity of Qoheleth, and that it belongs to a period subsequent to the Alexandrine era (333 B. C.), we are prepared to find in it traces of the influences of Greek Philosophy. Well-bred Jews began to be versed in Greek, and it is not to be wondered at if the Rabbis endeavored to exclude from the Canon a work which exhibited such marked tendencies to foreign modes of thought and expression as were utterly alien to Jewish culture. Let us try to form some idea of what these Grecian, or Græco-Roman, influences are.

In the first chapter, Qoheleth sets forth his cosmological conceptions. He, like the Stoics, seems to have adopted the theories of Heraclitus—the cardinal principle of which is that of change; no *being*, but a constant *becoming*. With this thought he sets out, and to this thought he returns; and to nearly every inquiry which he raises, he adds the reflection הכל הבל ורעות רוח (ii, 11), "All is vanity and striving after wind." Heraclitus taught that the primordial element was $\pi\tilde{\upsilon}\rho$; all material existence emanates from $\pi\tilde{\upsilon}\rho$ and returns to $\pi\tilde{\upsilon}\rho$. What the Stoics meant by $\pi\tilde{\upsilon}\rho$, Qoheleth explains by the term אלהים, which we are accustomed to render "God;" but the Hebrews generally used the word יהוה in referring to the Supreme Being—the name of their national God. Now it is worthy of note that Qoheleth, although a Jew, uses the word אלהים about thirty times, and יהוה never once. Surely this is design, and not accident. The root idea of אלהים is supreme, might or power. The plural form is intensive, and what Hebrew word is there which would better express Heraclitus' notion of $\pi\tilde{\upsilon}\rho$? This אלהים, Qoheleth says, has set all things in motion. All things are in perpetual flux; there is an endless alternation of creation and destruction, not only in all matter, organic and inorganic, but even in those human processes which we call psychical. Beginning with man as the microcosm, Qoheleth proceeds to the macrocosm beyond and above man, to show that each is dependent upon, and complementary to, the other. By way of introduction, Qoheleth begins as follows:

רור הלך ורור בא והארץ לעולם עמדה (i. 4), (One) generation passeth and (another) generation cometh, but the inhabitants* (ארץ) abide forever. At the very outset, Qoheleth would familiarize his reader with the notion of change. One generation passes out of existence, another comes into existence, and this cycle must go on forever. This course must and always will be renewed, so that the same objects, events and actions will recur indefinitely, reappear and recur. Turning to the universe and the forces therein operating, he sets forth the four elements which for him, as for Heraclitus, constituted all things in nature.

In i, 5, we read: זורה השמש ובא השמש ואל מקומו שואף זורה הוא שם, "The sun also ariseth and the sun goeth down and hasteth to his place where he ariseth." (R. V.) The word שואף means to "pant" or to "breathe hard"—expressing intense longing or desire; and Qoheleth seems to indicate here the innate tendency of all things to return to their primordial source; hence the figure of strong exertion and striving to attain the original principle. In i, 6, we read, הולך אל דרום וסובב אל עפון סובב סבב, "The wind, going toward the north and circling toward the south goes circling, circling, and the wind returns (again and again) to its circlings."† In these verses appear the four elements from which all things proceed and to which all things return; viz., fire, water, air and the earth. The earth is mentioned first, because she is, as it were, the mother; next the sun, because of his intense heat—he is the generative fire; then follow the air and the water. There is an expression also in i, 7,—"All the streams run into the sea, yet the sea is not full"—which may be taken as a part of the reference to the four elements and which strikingly resembles a theory of Heraclitus, which the Stoics adopted.

According to Zeller‡ they held that the sun is sustained by the vapors from the sea; the moon by those from fresh water, and the stars by those from the land. This notion of vapors rising from the sea to higher regions of space was most likely taught the Hebrews by the Greeks; although it can hardly be affirmed that it was originally a Greek conception. Without being able to cite any authority, the writer is impressed with the belief that some Hebrew writers set forth the opinion that the sun and the moon attract the vapors of the waters, thus supplying themselves with new matter, to prevent annihilation; but certainly these opening verses of Qoheleth contain an elabo-

*An allowable synecdoche.

†See marginal rendering, A. V.

‡Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics, p. 200 et seq.

ration of the idea which would not be expected in one unfamiliar with the views of the Stoics. The emphasis laid upon the instability of material things is different from anything found elsewhere in the canonical scriptures, and is surely opposed to the whole spirit of the Old Testament. Furthermore, the idea that all things move in cycles, and that the elements after returning to their original sources repeat the exact processes indefinitely, is a very clear evidence of the influence of Stoic philosophy. In the midst of all this change in the universe, the only thing which Qoheleth regards as stable is the earth; which, he seems to say, is the constant scene of the operation of external forces. It is

the earth alone which "abideth forever" (לעלם עמרה). It must be borne in mind that Qoheleth is more poet than philosopher, and we arrive at his ideas of cosmogony only through casual expressions or suggestions. His main purpose was not to elaborate a system of philosophy, but to contemplate man as man in his relation to things essential to his survival; and surely the earth, upon which man exists, and of which he forms a part, is the thing most closely related to him. This geocentric notion is also one of the principles of the Stoics, who believed that the earth was created before anything else in the universe. "By the mutual play of these four elements the world is formed, built round the earth as a centre; heat, as it is developed out of water, moulding the chaotic mass."* In i, 8, Qoheleth sets forth

his notion of constant flux in the universe—כל הרברים נעים. All things are full of weariness (go through the same processes and in the same manner). It is a perpetual going from, and returning to, the primary condition. "Man cannot utter (it) the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." (R. V.) The influence of Greek thought is still more manifest in the verses which follow. It will suffice to quote the rendering of the Revised Version. "That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there a thing whereof men say, See, this is new? it hath been already in the ages which were before us. There is no remembrance of the former (generations) neither shall there be any remembrance of the latter (generations) that are to come, among those that shall come after." (i, 9-11). It seems impossible to read this without the conviction that Qoheleth had adopted the Stoical idea, that as soon as the course of the world has come to an end, "the formation of a new world will begin so exactly corresponding with the previous world, that every particular thing, every particular person, and every occurrence will recur in it, precisely as they occurred in

*Zeller, op. cit. pp. 161-4.

the world preceding.”* According to Seneca†, *Veniet iterum qui nos in lucem reponat dies*. “This applies to every fact and to every occurrence in the new world at the *παλιγγενεσία* or *ἀποκατάστασις* (as the return of a former age is called): thus there will be another Socrates, who will marry another Xantippe, and be accused by another Anytus and Meletus.‡ Hence Marcus Aurelius§ deduces his adage that “nothing new happens under the sun.” Qoheleth not only adopts this view of physical phenomena, but extends the principle to psychical conditions. The same law which brings about the interchange and interplay of things contrary to each other in the external life of the world, is manifest also in the internal life of man. Waking and sleeping, youth and old age, sorrow and joy—all these opposing forces constitute the motive power of human action; in other words, are the prime factors which make up “life.” The strife or contrast of opposing forces is what makes men live. Mark how forcibly this idea is developed in, iii, 1-8, *שָׁלוֹם . . . לְכָל* “A time to be born and a time to die, etc.” Heraclitus, in elucidating his idea of “contrary currents,” taught that nothing originates or exists except by the opposition of contraries. “Organic life is produced by the male and the female; musical harmony by sharp and flat notes; it is sickness that makes us appreciate health; without exertion, there can be no sweet repose; without dangers, no courage; without evil to overcome, no virtue. Evil does not exist without good, nor good without evil. Evil is a relative good and good is a relative evil. Like being and non-being, good and evil disappear in the universal harmony.”|| Qoheleth, to be sure, is not very scientific in his statements; he has Macaulay’s fondness for striking antitheses and may sacrifice clearness to an epigram or an alliteration; but his leading idea is manifest, viz., that contrast is our measure and appreciation of things, as well as the motive power of action. For Qoheleth there can be no hate without love; no pain without pleasure and *vice versa*. Qoheleth proceeds to inquire why this general law obtains; and the only answer that he can get is *אלהים*. He is the cause of all; he has ordered all; he is the unknowable and uncontrollable power.

In the twelfth chapter, Qoheleth seems to look forward to the destruction of the world. Here his style reaches the summit of poetic fancy. As he pointed out in the first chapter the beneficial results of the generative power of fire, so in the last chapter Qoheleth sets forth the results of the extinction of the sun with its heat and light. In thus postulating an end of the world, he agrees with Greek philosophy, especially Heraclitus. It must not be overlooked, however, that the earth, after everything on

*Zeller, op. cit. pp. 166-67. †Zeller, op. cit. p. 167. ‡Ep. 36, 10.

§Lib. viii, 19.

||Weber, History of Philosophy, p. 35.

it has been annihilated, continues its existence as an element until the world begins to repeat its course. This may be inferred from xii, 7: הָיָה . . . יוֹשֵׁב, "And the dust will return to the earth as it was." The earth, it is assumed, is one of the four elements; everything which originated from it must of necessity return to it; and (v. 7 b), נָתַנָּה . . . וְהָרִוּהָ, "the breath (or soul) will return to אֱלֹהִים who gave it." Lucretius taught the same doctrine:* "Credit item retro de terra quod fuit ante, in terras, et quod missum est ex ætheris oris, id rursum cœli relatum templa receptant." Before this verse, the theologians stood aghast and helpless. They attempted various explanations, all of them allegorical, and quite naturally their conclusions were contradictory, each of all the others. The most reasonable hypothesis seems to be that Qoheleth had in mind an earthquake as the cause of the general annihilation. There is one more passage (and this from the epilogue of Qoheleth) which suggests a thought of Marcus Aurelius—"the flower of Stoicism." Although Qoheleth is separated from the Antonine Emperor by an interval of between two and three centuries, it is certain that the Roman Stoic would never have quoted an author of the despised Jewish race. There must, therefore, be some common source from which both have borrowed. Compare Ecclesiastes xii, 12: "There is no end of making many books in great number and much study is a weariness of flesh," with Marcus Aurelius ii, 2-3: Leave off from books . . . "Rid yourself of the thirst for books." Enough has been said to show the general similarity of the thought of Qoheleth to that of the Stoics. There are also certain Græcisms of expression in Qoheleth which tend to establish this position. Among these we may note the following from the list of the Catholic scholar Zirkel:

עֲשׂוֹת טִיב = εὖ πράττειν (iii, 12); יוֹם טִיבָה = εὖ ἡμερία (vii, 14); יָפָה in conjunction with טִיב = καλὸς καγαθός (v, 17), תִּיר = σκέπτεσθαι (i, 13; ii, 3); תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַשׁ = ὑφ' ἡλίῳ. The one great inconsistency with the Stoical philosophy in Qoheleth is the general tendency towards what seems to be a reckless disregard of social relations and an individual abandonment to the stern and inflexible fate which nature seems to assign to men so arbitrarily whether they be good or bad, wise or foolish. The watchword of Stoicism was resignation; its great rule was to live conformably to nature; so that while Qoheleth looks to Stoicism for his physics, his ethical principles seem to come from another quarter. In a word, while his thought was, in the main, Stoic, his habit seems to have been Epicurean. This brings us to the consideration of Epicurean influences in Qoheleth, which we reserve for the next chapter.

*De Rerum Natura, ii, 998.

III.

According to Epicureanism, the *summum bonum* is pleasure. Qoheleth agrees with Epicureanism that the possession of a tranquil spirit is necessary to the pursuit of pleasure. Neither looks upon carnal indulgence as pleasure, because such enjoyments are fleeting and their consequences painful and disastrous; and both Qoheleth and Epicurus seek to avoid all pain, especially such as is caused by a disturbed condition of the mind. Pleasure is two-fold—mental and physical—and each is concomitant of the other. Wisdom and intelligence are the noblest objects of desire. Although we cannot attain to the real knowledge, “and even if the wise says he knows it, he is not correct; he cannot find it,” וְגַם אִם יֹאמַר הַחֲכָם לָדַעַת לֹא יוּכַל לִמְצָא (viii, 17); yet we can be guided by wisdom and attain to tranquillity of mind. This is why Qoheleth so often contrasts wisdom with folly. He hates folly, but loves wisdom, with all his heart and soul, and cites numberless examples to prove its beneficent power. Wisdom and intelligence, according to Qoheleth and the Epicureans, give us immunity from fear of whatever sort, and make us independent of, and superior to, inordinate passions and vain desires. We hold ourselves in check and thus are enabled to assume the right attitude towards pain and pleasure, so as to take to ourselves the maximum of enjoyment with the minimum of discomfort. If pleasure was to be the supreme object of life, some way had to be found to put away the fear of death. Upon this point, Epicurus expresses himself as follows: “Our fear of death is not caused by our dread of non-existence; what makes us regard it with such terror is the fact that we involuntarily associate with the idea of nothingness, an idea of life, *i. e.*, the notion of feeling this nothingness; we imagine that the dead man is conscious of his gradual extinction; that he feels himself burning or devoured by the worms; that the soul continues to exist and to feel. . . . As long as we are alive, death does not exist for us; and when death appears, we no longer exist. Hence we can never come into contact with death; we never feel its icy touch which we dread so much, consequently, we should not be hindered by foolish fears from attaining the goal of our existence—happiness.* Qoheleth takes precisely the same stand when he says, “A living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten” (ix, 4-6). That is to say, as long as the shadow of the hereafter exists in our minds, unalloyed pleasure is an impos-

*See Weber's History of Philosophy, p. 138, et. seq. and Diogenes of Laerte, x, 140.

sibility. That there can be any such combination as pleasure and suffering, Qoheleth, like the Epicureans, seems to deny. "Corpus sine dolore: animus sine perturbatione" is their maxim. This view, they hold, requires them to break away from many long in-bred notions. Time and again, Qoheleth asserts, with great positiveness, that we need not, and should not, fear anything; because there is nothing to be feared since everything ends with death. "Whatever attaineth to do by thy strength, (that) do; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in שׂוֹאֵל whither thou goest" (ix, 10). Of course we know that we are doomed to die; but we also know that death terminates all existence; there is no such thing as immortality; we are resolved into the same elements of which we were originally composed. This negation of immortality is forcibly emphasized in the third chapter, verses 19-20, "The sons of men are a chance, and the beasts are a chance, and one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, (רוּחַ) and man hath no pre-eminence above the beasts; for all is vanity. All go into one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." And again in the ninth chapter at the second verse, we read: "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner; (and) he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath." (R. V.) Qoheleth's conclusion is that pleasure is the end of life, and his admonition is to enjoy as happy an existence as possible. "Go thy way," he says (ix, 7-8), "eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God hath already accepted thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let not thy heart lack ointment." (R. V.) After thus endeavoring to dispel the illusions, as they seem to him, of fear, he is consistent in his further counsel that life be regarded and employed as a long holiday into which no sorrow or pain is ever to be admitted. Nevertheless, all sensuous delights are barred out of his scheme of happiness, nor do wealth and luxury necessarily bring real pleasure with them. On the contrary, the unbridled desire for these serves only to disturb the serenity of the mind, and therefore begets pain rather than pleasure. Genuine happiness is dependent upon self-sufficiency. "The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the fulness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep" (v, 12, R. V.). It is the restriction of wants, rather than the enlargement of possessions, which makes one rich in reality. The simplest fare yields as much enjoyment as the most dainty, and is much more conducive to physical health. Neither Epicurus nor Qoheleth could reconcile poverty with their ideas of the *summum bonum*, after the manner of the Stoics. Want entails pain and suffering which

must, above all things, be avoided; but both counsel moderation of desires; and as long as the legitimate wants of the body are supplied, there can be no unsatisfied legitimate desire and hence there can be no suffering. One who cannot, to this extent, at least, raise himself above external conditions, cannot hope to attain serenity of mind. "Si cui sua non videntur amplissima, licet totius mundi dominus sit tamen miser est," says Seneca.* Compare this saying with that of Qoheleth (v, 10), "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase." Epicurus, we know, lived most abstemiously, limiting his daily expenses for food to one mina; and Qoheleth might, like him, have been happy as Zeus, on no less frugal a diet. To Qoheleth, as to the Epicureans, it seemed the veriest folly to lose the bone in grasping at the shadow; to give up a certainty of present good for the uncertain hope of a better future, and to sacrifice the end of life to the means of living. Qoheleth says (iv, 6), "Better is an handful with quietness, than two handfuls with labor and striving after wind." This self-sufficiency, however, does not consist in using little, but in needing little. Qoheleth expressly recommends fine garments, perfumes, etc.,† if one have the good fortune to possess them; but no one must depend upon these for happiness, "Behold," he says, "I know by experience that it is good‡ that every man should eat and drink and enjoy good in all his labor;" (R. V.) but the senses are not to be recklessly and blindly satisfied, for this would be to degrade the wise man to the level of a fool; for the fool is the one who walks blindly, but the wise man is guided by his wisdom, his eyes are in his head.§ (החכם עיניו בראשו).

Qoheleth gives the rule which he applied to his own enjoyment of pleasure: "Mine heart yet guiding me with wisdom."|| Qoheleth and the Epicureans have no room in their scheme for the austerities of the Stoics who aimed at independence through the subversion of the instincts of the senses and by the discipline of the body to the point of indifference to all comfort. The senses are to be gratified, so far as such gratification is consistent with wisdom and intelligence. They are to be the servants—not the masters—of the mind. He himself pursued this principle, even in the matter of "cheering his flesh with wine" and "indulging in folly."¶ He seems to have resolved deliberately to surrender his body to the allurements of pleasure, without giving too free play to passion. He may have been trying the experiment of uniting the pursuit of pleasure with that of wisdom; for he seems to strive after intellectual enjoyment with no less avidity than he sought the gratification of his senses. Especially does he seem to have had a taste for art. He built mansions; planted vineyards, made gardens and pleasure-grounds; gath-

*Ep. 9, 20.

§ii, 14.

‡iii, 13.

||Ibid.

†ix, 8.

¶ii, 3.

ered around himself men singers and women singers; there is much refinement and little coarseness in all that we can learn concerning his personal tastes; for in all his pursuit of pleasure, he says: "My wisdom remained with me."* As has been before observed, Qoheleth despised folly and fools as thoroughly as did the Stoics and Epicureans. He is in mortal dread lest his heir should be a fool.—"I hate all my labor wherein I labored under the sun; seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored and wherein I have showed wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. Therefore I turned about to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labor wherein I had labored under the sun. For there is a man whose labor is wisdom and with knowledge and with success; yet to a man who hath not labored therein shall he give it for his portion."* No Stoical condemnation of folly could be more scathing than that which appears in this, as in other sayings of Qoheleth. We must not fail to note how largely the personal equation, if we may so term it, enters into all the observations of Qoheleth. Almost always he introduces the statement of a deduction by the expression וראיתי, "and I have experienced." He seems to have experimented with various theories of life and conduct, which may account for his apparent inconsistencies and self-contradictions; but he always comes back to the emphatic reiteration, that the only object worthy of endeavor is wisdom. As an illustration of the worth and excellence of wisdom, he relates an interesting incident, about the historicity of which discussion is not necessary to our argument. In the ninth chapter (vv, 13-16) he says: "I have also seen wisdom under the sun on this wise, and it seemed great unto me; there was a little city and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it; now there was found in it a poor wise man and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man." Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength; nevertheless, the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard." This seems to be a fitting climax to Qoheleth's discussion of wisdom as a power in itself, and as a regulative principle in the pursuit of happiness. In what follows, he proceeds to outline a general plan for the guidance of the wise in the practical affairs of life—a plan which is essential to real happiness. In the first place, Qoheleth is no ascetic. "Alteri vivas oportet, si vis tibi vivere," might have been his motto. Under any and all circumstances, every one must have friends. Isolated happiness is a paradox. Alone, one is helpless, weak and exposed to all manner of discomfort and

*ii, 9.

†ii, 13-21.

even danger; united to others, he is strong, and able to live safely and peacefully. A purely selfish motive prompts the desire for friends and social intercourse. It is the interest of the individual, not of society, which Qoheleth has in view; the benefit to society is merely incidental. Here again, Qoheleth and Epicureanism are at one. Of course, only the wise man will act in accordance with the scheme of Qoheleth, because wisdom is necessary to the perception and foresight of the advantages accruing from such a course of conduct. In the fourth chapter, Qoheleth sets forth the advantages of combination, and the evils of separation. In verses 7-12, we read: "Then I returned and saw vanity under the sun. There is one that is alone and he hath not a second; yea, he hath neither son nor brother; yet is there no end of all his labor, neither are his eyes satisfied with riches. For whom, then, saith he, do I labor and deprive myself of good? This also is vanity, yea, it is a sore travail. Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, and hath not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one be warm (alone)? And if a man prevail against him that is alone, two shall withstand him; and a three-fold cord is not easily broken." (R. V.)

Here are two striking and vivid pictures. In the first we behold a solitary rich man who expects to increase his store of happiness by holding himself aloof from all companionship with his kind; but he only injures his own best interests and defeats the very purpose of his endeavor. He becomes "his own worst enemy." The associations and alliances which this foolish man deprecates lest through them his wealth be dissipated, and with it his happiness, are really the only means of attaining his end; for two men, laboring together, are able by mutual counsel and assistance to accomplish much more than would be possible for any one individual working unaided. This is the **כסיל** who is the object of Qoheleth's contempt.

In the second picture is presented a striking contrast to the first. Because of the sudden introduction of the last words "a three-fold cord is not easily broken," there seems to be some ground for the allegorical explanation of the rabbis who regarded one of the travelers as Companionship, the other as Friendship. These two appear first upon the scene, but soon they are joined by a third, Strength, which results from combination. Of course this is only a fanciful conceit, but the number "three" was a familiar symbol of completeness to the Jewish mind, and some such idea may have been in the mind of Qoheleth. This exaltation of friendship has a decidedly Epicurean flavor. The Epicurean friendship is second only to the Pythagorean, if to any. "*Non sine amico*," says Seneca "*vi-*

sceratio leonis ac lupi vita est.''* In a broad sense, this dependence upon others is, for Qoheleth as well as for the Epicureans, real independence, as being the fundamental principle of happiness and the indispensable condition of pleasure. Since happiness and pleasure presuppose dependence upon others, Qoheleth is an altruist; but from a purely utilitarian motive. Give that you may get—not get that you may give, is his precept. “Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days.”† (R. V.)

In his political ideas, Qoheleth is Stoic rather than Epicurean. The Epicureans were monarchists. “The stern and unflinching moral teaching of the Stoics had found its political expression in the unbending republican spirit so often encountered at Rome. Naturally the soft and timid spirit of the Epicureans took shelter under a monarchical constitution.”‡ The Epicureans did not scruple to render homage to princes, and were loyally submissive to the powers that be, even though they took part actively in public affairs only when peculiar circumstances required them to do so.

Qoheleth has scant reverence for kings and princes as such. They are to be avoided rather than courted, for it is so easy to incur the royal displeasure; therefore, he argues, “Keep the king’s command, and that in regard of the oath of God. Be not hasty to go out of his presence; persist not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him. Because the king’s word hath power, and who may say unto him, ‘What doest thou?’ ”§ The king, then, is to be respected as the lawfully constituted authority; but he is not hedged by any divinity.

IV.

We have now endeavored to show why the weight of evidence compels the conclusion that the book known as Ecclesiastes must be assigned to a period subsequent to the exile, and that it bears evidences, such as are not found in any other of the Old Testament writings, to the influence upon the writer’s thought of the Greek philosophy of the period. A few general reflections upon the character of the book, as a whole, may not unfittingly conclude the treatment of our subject.

It may be an indication of the general effect of Greek thought that Qoheleth fails to set forth any very positive ethical standard in the sense of concrete moral duties. The author may not be chargeable with exalting the wise man, as do the Stoics, so far above every custom and all law that he does not necessarily forfeit his character for virtue by the commission of even deception, suicide, or murder. Nevertheless, although we find in

*Ep. xix, 10. †Zeller, op. cit. p. 492. ‡xi, 1. §viii, 2, 3.

Qoheleth maxims for adversity. for patience under oppression, for reverence towards God, with memories of pessimistic moods and meditations upon the joys of industry and noble reflections upon benevolence and calm views of death, there is also in Qoheleth, as in the "philosophy of the porch," an excessive abstract subjectivity, which seems to lack applicability to the particular instance. There is a mournful beauty about the whole book which well comports with the synagogue appointment, that it shall be read in the season of autumn. The melancholy thoughts which its pages inspire in sensitive minds are in striking harmony with the shortening days and the falling leaves, "the beautiful death of the year." Qoheleth has the same fascination for many natures as the theories of Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann. It seems to fit in with the tone of joylessness which we are tempted to think is dominant in our modern life. That high-strung spirit, Amiel, says in his journal, "The happy man, as this century is able to produce him, is one who keeps a brave face before the world and distracts himself the best he can from dwelling upon the thought which is hidden in his heart. . . . The outward peace of such a man is but despair well masked: his gayety is the carelessness of a heart which has lost all its illusions and has learned to acquiesce in an indefinite putting off of happiness. His wisdom is really acclimatization to sacrifice; his gentleness should be taken to mean privation patiently borne, rather than resignation; in a word, he submits to an existence in which he feels no joy and he cannot hide from himself that all the alleviations with which it is strewn cannot satisfy the soul. The thirst for the Infinite is never appeased. God is wanting." This from a Frenchman; a source to which we are accustomed to look for thoughtless, volatile good-humor. It is Stoicism—pure and simple. If we may coin a word, it is also Qohelethism. The "highest good" is only an ideal after which we should strive, but which we shall never succeed in making actual. And what do our modern poets tell us? For the poets are always those who best reflect the spiritual temper of the time. We do not forget the genial optimism, the strong, manly hopefulness of Robert Browning who sees real success in "Apparent Failure," and whose inspiring note always rings true:

"God's in His Heaven
All's right with the world."

But a far different spirit seems to move over the page, as we read from Tennyson, or Clough, or Matthew Arnold. They have written strong words, beautiful words, even hopeful words sometimes; but they are, as a whole, to Browning, what A minor is to C major in music. Take, for example, that beautiful poem of

Arnold's, "Self-Dependence." What is his "conclusion" of the whole matter?

"Resolve to be thyself and know that he
Who finds himself loses his misery."

The lines are beautiful indeed, but it is a sad and mournful beauty, the beauty of the notes of the captive bird, which is too wise to bruise its breast and wings against the bars of its cage, and so takes its stand upon its perch and tries to sing as sweetly as it can. His only way to lose his misery is to find his unsatisfied, unblessed and uncompleted self. Matthew Arnold is only one of the great army of modern Qoheleths. They acknowledge and reverence an unknown and unknowable אלהים, they do not know and adore a personal and ever present יהוה. There stood once upon Mars' Hill a man who could talk Greek poetry and philosophy with the men of the Areopagus, quoting the Epicurean maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." He said that this was a good enough philosophy, "if the dead rise not;" for if the spirit of man go not upward; if this little span of life be all, we are, indeed, "of all men most miserable." Upon that theory, what room is there for unselfishness, for generosity, for brotherly kindness? In such a scheme, the only rational course is for each one to get as much, and give as little, as he can. But in a scheme which admits infinity of duration to life, there must be infinity of compass as well; and we cannot leave our neighbor out of the account. In such a scheme, truth and justice count; fraternity and fellowship count; love and loyalty count; for if one member suffer, all the other members must suffer with it; and nothing can be good for a part which is not good for the whole. Qoheleth with his sad refrain, "Vanity of vanities," witnesses to the unrest which is the portion of all who miss the *summum bonum* of that eternal life which is to know יהוה and do His will.



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